**IELTS Writing TASK 1- Letter Writing**

In IELTS General Writing, the first task or question is writing a letter in response to a situation. A candidate is supposed to write a letter of about 150 words. There are three kinds of letters- *informal, semi-formal or formal.*

**Informal letter writing** Informal letter is a letter written to someone whom you know very well. For example your friend, brother, cousin etc.

**Useful Language**

**Salutation**

Hi John, Dear John

**Opening of an informal letter:**

Hey, how are you? It’s been long since we’ve been in touch with each other.....

It’s been ages since we’ve been in touch...

**Thanking**

I’d like to thank you very much......

Thanks a lot for............

**Apologizing**

I’m really sorry about......

**Asking for help**

I wanted to ask you if........

I was wondering of you could help me.

I’m writing to ask you if......

**Expressing satisfaction**

I was thrilled to find out that...

**Complaining / expressing dissatisfaction**

I am not happy about...

**Giving bad news**

I am sorry to tell you that.....

I am afraid I have some bad news.

**Making suggestions**

**Don’t you think it would be a good idea.......**

**Closing paragraph**

Thanks a lot for your help and hope to hear from you soon.

If you need to know anything else, just get in touch.

**Signature**

Take care, Good luck, Best wishes

**Points to focus:**

* Tone/register should be appropriate.
* Language and vocabulary used should match the tone of the letter.
* All the bullet points in the question must be addressed.
* The letter should be well organised and relevant.
* **Use intensifying adjectives and adverbs to show enthusiasm**: I've got a fantastic new job. | My new boss is an absolute nightmare.
* **Use idiomatic language**: Things have been getting on top of me at work lately. | It's been ages since we last managed to meet up. | What have you been up to lately? | Let me know what you think. | I'll fill you in when we next meet.
* **Use question forms to make the letter read more like a conversation**: How are your studies going? | How does that sound to you?
* **Use phrasal verbs and phrases**: we get on well, write back soon, get in touch.
* **Use contractions**: I can't help thinking I should've told you sooner, I’m, You’re.

**Practice**

*(from primaryresources.uk)*

1. **Now try to find the correct phrases in this informal letter. Remember, this is for your friend.**

Dear James,

Love from How are you? /I trust this letter finds you well. I’ve been dead busy/extremely busy since your last letter. We have to work really hard at school to get ready/in preparation for our SATs.

Despite this, I did manage to play/partake of a game of football last night with my friends/acquaintances. We won/were victorious! It was boss/outstanding!

Also, my dad got me/purchased for me a new mobile telecommunication device/mobile phone.

It’s an 8210!

Anyway, gotta go/go to cease writing! Speak to you soon. Please write back/please respond swiftly.

Love from

My Name.

**B) If you have finished, use a dictionary to find the meaning of these words**

1.victorious

2.cease

3.respond

4.swiftly

5.acquaintances

***C) Using the language given above and considering the points to focus, change the following formal letter to an informal letter. Write 150 words.***

Dear Mr. Jones,

I regret not being able to get to your business dinner last Friday. I hope the dinner went well for all concerned. I was really looking forward to it, and I was all ready to leave the house when a relative arrived unexpectedly. She was only in town for the one evening before she went to my brother's house so I had to stay with her.

I tried to telephone you but your line was twice engaged when I telephoned. Later, I was otherwise engaged and didn't have the chance to ring again.

Please accept my sincerest apologies. I know you wanted to introduce me to Ms. Phoenix who you work with. I hope this will be possible at the next available opportunity .I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely

Stephen.

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***Questions for practice***

***Ques***

Canadian friend recently sent you a present by post. You want to thank him/her. Write a letter to your friend. In your letter

• say how you felt when you received the present

• describe what you like about it

• explain how you will use the present

Write at least 150 words.

You do NOT need to write your own address.

Begin your letter as follows:

Dear ..........,

Last Month you had a holiday overseas where you stayed with some friends. They have just sent you some photos of your holiday. Write a letter to your friends. In your letter:

* Thank them for the photos and for the holiday.
* explain why you didn’t write earlier
* invite them to come and stay with you

Write at least 150 words.

You do NOT need to write your own address

You won a competition and received a vacation for two as a prize. Write a letter to your friend asking him/her to go on a holiday with you. In the letter, you should:

* tell him/her about the competition you won,
* state what kind of vacation it is,
* explain why you would like him/her to go on a holiday with you

You should write at least 150 words.

You do NOT need to write your own address.

Begin your letter as follows:

Dear \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

A friend of yours won an award recently. Write to them:

* Congratulating them
* Letting them know what you have been doing.
* Asking them to visit you

You should write at least 150 words.

You do NOT need to write your own address.

A friend who lives in another country has invited you to come and stay with him/her on your next holiday. You are too busy to accept the invitation

Write a letter to your friend. In your letter

* Thank him/her for the invitation
* Explain why you cannot come
* Give him/her your other news

You should write at least 150 words.

You do NOT need to write your own address.

Your friend is an expert in international food and is going to publish a book soon.

Write a letter to him describing a special dish from your country. In your letter you should

* describe a special dish from your country
* explain what season people prefer to eat it in
* say why your friend should include this dish in his book

You should write at least 150 words.

You do NOT need to write your own address.

An English-speaking friend has written to you to say that he/she is planning to visit your country. Write a letter to your friend. In your letter

* give advice about where he/she should go
* explain what the best time of year to come is
* invite him/her to stay with you for a few days
* You should write at least 150 words.

You do NOT need to write your own address.

**A friend has agreed to look after your house and pet while you are on holiday.  
Write a letter to your friend. In your letter**

* **Give contact details for when you are away.**
* **give instructions about how to care for your pet**
* **Describe other household duties.**

You should write at least 150 words.

You do NOT need to write your own address

**IELTS writing –Semi Formal and Formal letters**

Semi formal letter is written to a person who you know but whom you are not in touch with frequently. For example your neighbour, landlord etc.

Formal Letter is written to someone you don’t know or haven’t met before. For example immigration manager, customer service executive etc.

***Overall, there is only a marginal difference between formal and semi-formal letters and it is mostly concerned with the opening and closing (salutation and complimentary close).***

**Useful Vocabulary**

**Salutation**

Dear John, Dear Mr.Smith (semi-formal), Dear Sir/Madam( formal)

**Opening of an informal letter:**

I am writing in regards to the....

I am writing in reference to.....

**Thanking**

I would like to express my gratitude.....

I am really thankful to you for....

**Apologizing**

Please accept my sincere apologies....

Kindly excuse me for....

**Asking for help**

I would be grateful if you could...

I would appreciate it if you could..

**Asking for information**  
I would like to ask for information about

I am writing to enquire about...

**Expressing satisfaction**

I was delighted to hear that...

**I was pleased to find out....**

**Complaining / expressing dissatisfaction**

I'm writing to express my dissatisfaction with...  
I'm writing to express my annoyance with..

**Giving bad news**

I regret to inform you that.....(formal)

I am really disturbed to let you know that....( semi-formal)

**Giving reasons**  
This is as a result of...  
This is owing to...

**Closing paragraph**

Please pass on my best wishes to your wife and children.

I look forward to seeing/meeting/(hearing from) you.  
**Complimentary close**

Yours sincerely, Yours faithfully, Yours truly

1. **Change the following informal letter to a formal letter:**

Below is a formal letter. You must decide which of the phrases in bold you think are most appropriate and adjust the letter to make it suitable. When you have finished, move down to the next letter.

Dear Mr Sexton,

I thought I’d write/ I am writing to complain about the state of the yard/condition of the playground. Over the last two weeks, I have noticed loads of rubbish/a great deal of litter.

I reckon/It is my opinion that this litter is a health hazard. For example, yesterday a year 4 boy fell over and cut his hand on a broken bottle. The boy I’m talking about/The boy in question needed four stitches.

Furthermore/On top of this, the litter is an eyesore. Our school has beautiful views of the river and these are wrecked/spoiled by the litter.

I believe/I reckon that there are a load of things/a number of things that you could do to fix/rectify this problem. Firstly, it may be possible for you/you could purchase additional litterbins. This would help stop/prevent people discarding their litter recklessly/willy-nilly.

What’s more/In addition, I think that our school needs better/more adequate security to prevent vandals littering.

To finish/In conclusion, I hope you will take my concerns seriously and I look forward to your reply/you writing back to me.

Yours Sincerely/Yours Faithfully

Name Here .

**Questions for practice**

1. **You have decided to apply for a job as a Spanish instructor that was advertised in the April edition of the magazine Teaching Professional. This ad was posted by Mr John Sullivan, director of the Spanish department at The Language Institute of Great Britain in London, England. In your letter to Mr Sullivan:**

* **explain why you are writing**
* **describe your qualifications and experience**
* **explain how they can contact you**

**Write at least 150 words. You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.**

(*Question taken from* [*Kaplan IELTS 2009-2010 Edition*](http://astore.amazon.com/bio0a-20/detail/142779961X)*)*

1. **You eat at your college cafeteria every lunch time. However, you think it needs some improvements. Write a letter to the college magazine. In your letter:**

* **explain what you like bout the cafeteria**
* **say what is wrong**
* **suggest how it could be improved**

**Begin your letter as follows: Dear Sir / Madam**

**You should write at least 150 words. You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.**

*(Question taken from* [***Instant IELTS: Ready-to-use Tasks and Activities***](http://astore.amazon.com/bio0a-20/detail/0521755336)*by Guy Brook-Hart)*

1. **You are looking for a part-time job. Write a letter to an employment agency. In your letter:**

* **introduce yourself**
* **explain what sort of job you would like**
* **say what experience and skills you have**

**Begin your letter as follows: Dear Sir / Madam**

**You should write at least 150 words. You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.**

*(Question taken from* [***Instant IELTS: Ready-to-use Tasks and Activities***](http://astore.amazon.com/bio0a-20/detail/0521755336)*by Guy Brook-Hart)*

1. **Last Tuesday you flew from New York to Paris. When you arrived home, you discovered that you had left your cabin bag on the plane. Write a letter to the airline. In your letter, you should explain:**

* **where and when you lost your bag**
* **what your bag looks like**
* **what its contents were**

**Begin your letter as follows: Dear Sir / Madam**

**You should write at least 150 words. You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.**

*(Question taken from* [*Kaplan IELTS 2009-2010 Edition*](http://astore.amazon.com/bio0a-20/detail/142779961X)*)*

1. **You are unhappy about a plan to make your local airport bigger and increase the number of flights. You live near the airport.  
   Write a letter to your local newspaper. In your letter:**

* explain where you live
* describe the problem
* give reasons why you do not want this development.

Begin your letter as follows: Dear Sir / Madam

You should write at least 150 words. You should spend about 20 minutes on thistask.